BARBEAU

Assomption Sash

Marius Barbeau

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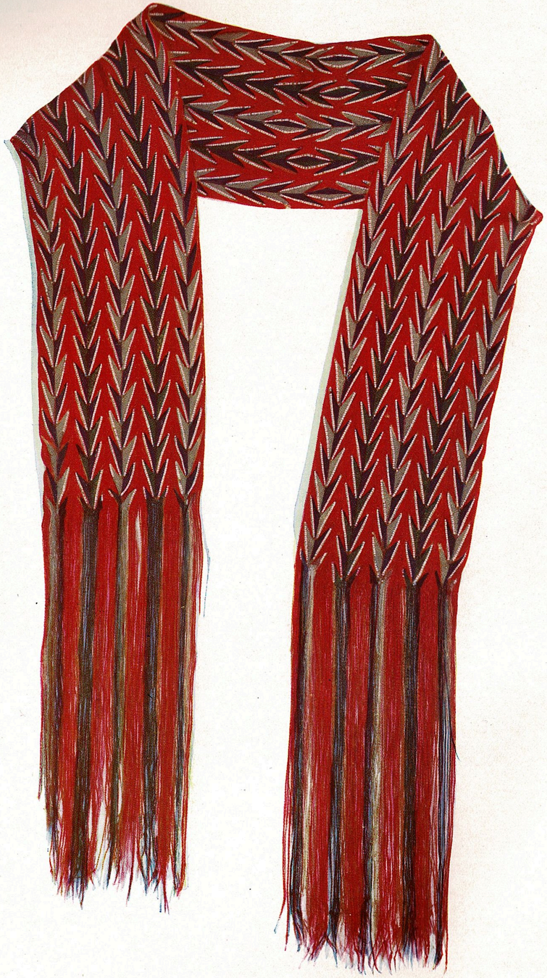
PLATE I



Beaded arrow sash of Dr. Chénier in 1837; of an exceptional type, with five bands interlocking together (Dominion Archives, Ottawa, Ont.).

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ASSOMPTION SASH

BY

Marius Barbeau

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CONTENTS

PAGE

Finger weaving in arrow sashes and garters 1
  Arrow sashes of L'Assomption or L'Achigan 3
  Early braided sashes 7
  Other types of sashes collected among the Indians 9
  Red basket-weave sashes among the Iroquois and their neighbours . . . 13
  Braided garters 14
  Odd garters and sashes made on small looms 16
  Written records of the French colonial period 17
  Ancient Indian sashes in the Dauphin de France collection 21
  Origin of finger weaving 22
Arrow sashes 26
Achigan sashes 28
Garter weaving 34
  (1) Beginning the garter at one end 35
  (2) Beginning the garter in the centre 37

Illustrations

Plate I. Beaded arrow sash owned by Dr. Chénier in 1837 . . . . Frontispiece
II. A gentleman travelling in a dog cariole 1
III. Mme. Françoise Venne weaving a sash 4
IV. Mme. Napoléon Lord weaving a sash 5
V. Mlle. Rosa Bouchard making and wearing a braided garter . . . 15
VI. Old sashes at the National Museum of Canada 39
VII. Garters and sashes of various types—French Canadian, Indian, and Norwegian 40
VIII. Assomption sash 41
IX. Iroquois and trade sashes 42
X. Quebec sashes 43
XI. Sashes and garters 44
XII. Indian sashes 45
XIII. Indian sashes 46
XIV. Indian sashes 47
XV. Indian sashes 48
XVI. Indian sashes 49
XVII. Indian sashes 50
XVIII. Garters 51

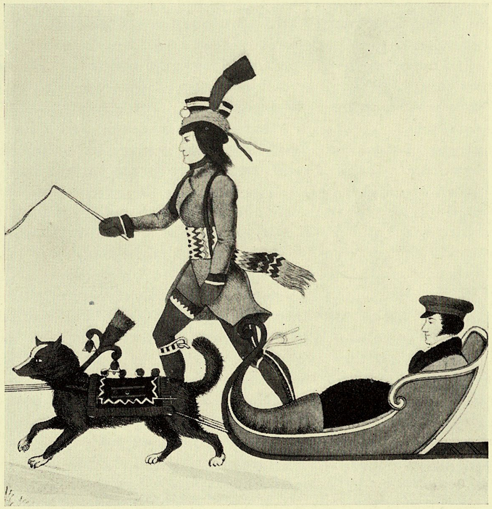
Figure 1. Drawings from Indian sashes at the Museum of the American Indian, N.Y. 10
2. Drawings from Indian sashes at the Museum of the American Indian, N.Y. 11
3. The technique of garter weaving 16
4. Designs in the sashes and belts of the old Dauphin de France collection . 23
5. Sashes at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, the British Museum, and the Musée municipal de Versailles 24

ASSOMPTION SASH

FINGER WEAVING IN ARROW SASHES AND GARTERS

WHEN the Canadian fur traders long ago used to meet the Indian hunters gathered for barter, they donned their great coats, beaver hats, coloured sashes and garters, and other finery (Plate II). By this stage-like display, which always accompanied the smoking of the calumet and trade palavers, the white men wanted to impress with their superiority the natives who, poor as they were, none the less craved personal adornment and prestige. The tribal leaders from the first were fond of acquiring similar insignia of power and of emulating their dis-

PLATE II



"A gentleman travelling in a dog cariole at the Hudson's Bay", 1825 (coloured lithograph by W. Day, 1825, Public Archives, Ottawa).

tinguished visitors, so that great coats with hood, red cloth leggings, beaded bands and pouches, brightly coloured sashes and garters of fine wool with flowing fringes and tufted tips, met with favour in the barter, and very soon formed part of the equipment of each chief worthy of the name.

Thus began a widespread diffusion across North America of trade articles and handicrafts at first foreign in the woodlands and the West, which, after a lapse of time and many changes, lingered in the country of their adoption and were later mistaken for indigenous—articles like bead work, silk work, and other decorative devices.

Are, for instance, the brightly coloured woollen sashes and garters native to America? In other words, is finger weaving, which they involve, a pre-Columbian technique, or is it an introduced feature which adapted itself to new surroundings? To this question contradictory answers, implicitly or otherwise, have already been given, and it is by no means easy to find our way through presumptions and a mass of poorly recorded facts that cover at least a few hundred years.

Ready answers to this historical problem, as in similar cases awaiting reconsideration, are found in ethnographic museums and monographs. For instance, the most noted implicit solution is suggested by the Museum of the American Indian, in New York, where, near the entrance, a magnificent braided arrow sash, 171 inches long and 10 inches wide (14/5102), is displayed by itself in a wall case and labelled Iroquois. On the strength of this, the finest braided sashes in existence (the *ceintures fléchées* of the Northwestern traders) were made by the Iroquois, though not necessarily only by themselves. And in the splendid collection of Indian sashes and garters of that museum, a number of varied specimens are labelled Iroquois, Micmac, Huron, Shawnee, Winnebago, Osage. This statement of cultural facts is corroborated by other museums, in particular the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and the National Museum of Canada. The Director of the Museum of the American Indian agreed, however, that the data in the catalogues were inconclusive, the specimens having been collected among the Indians, in the past 50 years or less, without any information as to whether they had been made locally or purchased elsewhere. In a show-case of the National Museum of Canada, two fine sashes exemplify Huron handicrafts. Yet these actually were made, the first on a heddle loom by Joseph Garneau, of Sillery, near Quebec, and the other, owned by a Montreal bourgeois, presumably was made at L'Assomption. These two sashes never were located on an Indian reserve. Upon close examination, Indian specimens of sashes in our museums may afford little or no evidence as to where they were made, nor even as to whether the Indians themselves practised finger weaving under any form whatsoever.

To find our way to certainty we must proceed from one established fact to another, so that, as a result, we may later bridge gaps and perhaps fathom the unknown. A number of such facts here are at our disposal. They enable us to observe the beginnings, growth, and diffusion of at least some types of garters and sashes. The others about which data are lacking may find their natural place in the scheme already outlined or remain outside, challenging attention. All this comes within the scope of the present study.

ARROW SASHES OF L'ASSOMPTION OR L'ACHIGAN

The best known of the facts under consideration concern the woollen sashes of the Montreal fur traders and bourgeois, these being called *ceintures fléchées*—arrow sashes or arrowed sashes—or as Assomption sashes, *ceintures de L'Assomption*, or again, *ceintures de Saint-Jacques de L'Achigan*, from the names of the localities where they were made.

These arrow sashes were woven in large numbers first for the North West Company and then for the Hudson's Bay Company, as they were an important article of barter all over the northern parts of this continent.

In the later stages of their home manufacture at St. Jacques de L'Achigan, for convenience they were produced in standardized form. The workers had to make them by the dozen at the lowest possible price. Middle-men, who controlled the production, hastened it by means of the specialization of the makers; some of them spun the wool hard and into double strands, others warped the double strands (*ourdir*) into sets, and the weavers, in the winter, worked at home from early dawn until ten or eleven at night, for less than 30 cents a day, to be paid in goods (for details *See* Achigan Sashes).

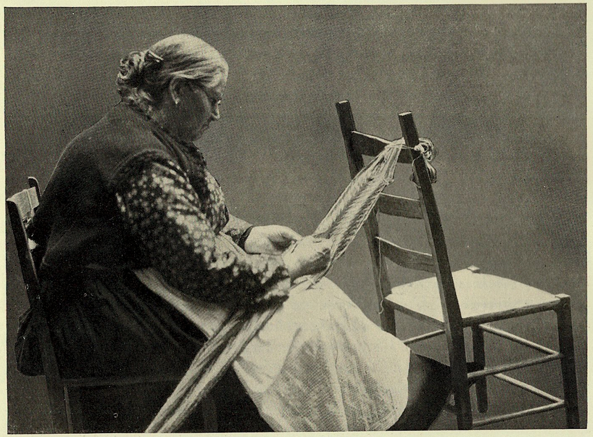
The result of standardization and trade abuses, of low prices and growing demand for cheap articles in the end—nearly 40 years ago—ruined the craft and brought about the production of a mechanically woven sash in England for the Hudson's Bay Company, which activity is still pursued.

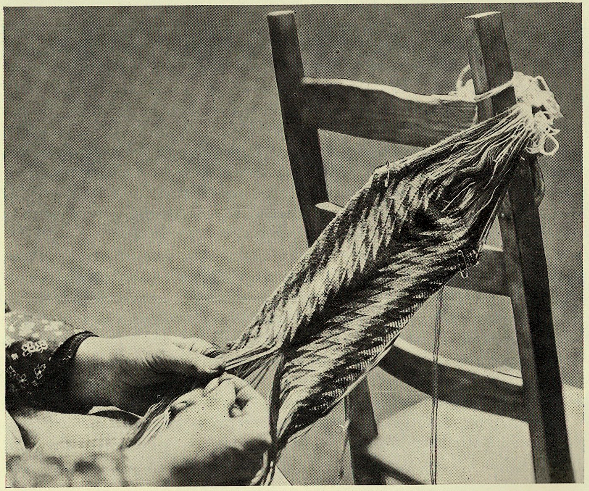
A home-made sash of good quality that used to retail at $15 is now replaced by a brilliant textile for sale at $3.25, and most people are no longer aware of the difference between genuine and imported sashes.

After the collapse of the Assomption or Achigan home industry (L'Achigan is the subdivision of L'Assomption where the weavers resided), the impression prevailed in Montreal and elsewhere that the art of sash-making had already vanished; indeed, that the secret of its complex technique was on the verge of being lost.

As a tribute to a remarkable Canadian craft of the past, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild exhibited a number of picked Assomption sashes at the Art Gallery of Montreal, in 1907, and had Mme. Venne, an old Achigan

Plate III

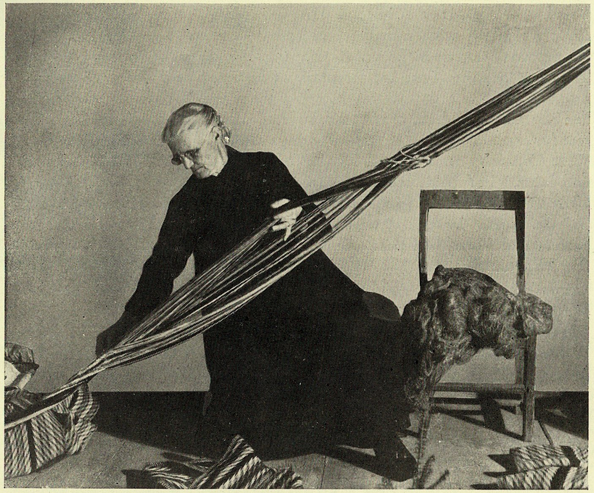




Mme. Françoise Venne, of St. Jacques L'Achigan, weaving a sash, about 1907 (Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal).

weaver, give public demonstrations of her work; she was considered the last representative of her type of weavers. This demonstration so entirely impressed Dr. E.-Z. Massicotte, Archivist of the Montreal Court House, that, in 1919, he brought out a few Assomption sashes at Folklore Evenings, which we both organized at Salle Saint-Sulpice, Montreal, and he published a short monograph on the sash and its history in Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society, 1924, pages 1-13. These were the first steps in an effort to save the technique of sash-making from oblivion. Mme. Napoléon Lord, of L'Achigan, was then discovered and led to reintroduce the craft into a Montreal convent; and she later appeared with two other weavers at the Quebec Folk-song and Handicraft Festivals. Public attention, as a result, was sufficiently aroused to prepare for later developments. And now, chiefly because of the teaching of finger weaving at the Quebec School of Domestic Handicrafts, sash weaving has become common knowledge to many women throughout French Canada.

Plate IV



Mme. Napoléon Lord, of St. Jacques L'Achigan, weaving a sash at the Quebec Festivals in 1927-28 (Associated Screen News).

Most of the wide sashes called *ceintures fléchées* are of the same kind as those shown in Plates III, IV, VI, and VIII. Many of them belong to private owners and collectors, who fondly treasure them. The specimens measured and analysed for the Museum suffice to give a fair idea of the type.

The *ceintures fléchées* seldom vary from the norm, which seems to have been fixed about 1830 or 1840; and they were all made at L'Assomption, more precisely, at St. Jacques de L'Achigan and Ste. Marie Salome, which are parish subdivisions of L'Assomption, and other localities in the neighbourhood, all of them northeast of Montreal. The three girls weaving sashes at the Nicolas Brisson establishment of Montreal, in 1825, no doubt were outsiders, presumably from L'Assomption.[1] Only one or two authentic makers of Assomption-like sashes have been mentioned for other localities (one for instance, at Orleans, near Ottawa), and it is probable that a forgotten link between them and the Assomption makers has existed. The bulk of the Assomption sashes were made for the Montreal fur traders; at first, in the early days after 1780, for those of the North West Company who recruited many of their voyageurs at L'Assomption, and later, after 1821, for the bourgeois of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were worn by bourgeois and voyageurs in their long journeys throughout the North West, and were also available as a trade article, as other garters and sashes had been even as early as during the French period.

The largest and finest examples of Assomption or Achigan sashes are over 15 feet long (including the fringes—the Iroquois sash, so-called, of the Museum of the American Indian, in New York, is 171 inches long), $10\frac{3}{4}$ and 10 inches wide, 2 pounds 9 ounces in weight, and with 32 arrows, 16 on each side. A number of them are about 9 inches wide; and the average trade sash made at L'Achigan, 40 years ago, was 6 inches wide. A few were even narrower.

The wool that the weavers used was different from that which the "habitants" now produce for knitting or weaving; it was dyed with old dyes, presumably vegetable and wood dyes, and indigo. So far as can be remembered it was sent to the weavers by the Montreal merchants, one of whom claimed, unreliably, it seems, that it was imported from France. Before being woven into sashes, it was spun over and twisted hard in double strands; that is, two, sometimes three, strands were spun into one.

The pattern in the *ceintures*, with very few exceptions, consisted of a wide red band or core (called *cœur* in French) in the centre that ran from one end to the other; this band was barbed along the edges, like a series of continuous arrows. On both sides of this core ran a series of parallel zigzags in varied colours, some of which were termed *flèches nettes* when in lozenge form. The arrow proper is so little in evidence in the prevailing sash of this type that it is to be wondered why it was ever known under the name of arrow sash (*ceinture fléchée*). The reason for this can be found in the oldest specimens, in which the arrow, often beaded, appears in full. In the early stages of the fur trade, about 1800, sashes of different types appear under distinct names on the invoice books of the North West Company, now preserved in the Archives of the Seminary of Quebec, thus: worsted sashes or belts of various sizes and prices, fine worsted belts, ceintures à flamme (flame-like)[1], ceintures à flèches (arrow sashes), fine ceintures, common worsted belts, common belts, N.W. worsted belts, scarlet do., fine scarlet do. Eventually the name of *ceinture fléchée* (arrow sash) came to prevail to the exclusion of other names, such as ceinture *à flamme* (flame-like), although actually the real arrow sash virtually disappeared and the ceinture à flamme (flame-like) would more fitly designate the type later standardized at L'Assomption.

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[1] Livre de Dépouillement du Recensement fait de la cité en 1825 (MS. in the Archives of the Seminary of Quebec).

All these sashes, on account of the length of the strands, were made from the middle towards the ends; the garter being short, could easily be woven from one end, although it usually was from the centre.

The Assomption sash is so complex and so uniform in all its manifestations that it constitutes a compact unit from the standpoint of history and manufacture, and the odd specimens recently collected among the Indians within the former domain of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company can form only part of the whole. This includes such sashes as the so-called Iroquois, Huron, and Micmac sashes of the Museum of the American Indian, in New York, of the National Museum of Canada, and of several other museums and private collections.

EARLY BRAIDED SASHES

Some of the sashes of the Assomption type, when they are old, have a story of their own to tell. Different from the others, they disclose the processes of their early growth and some of the features of the craft that later disappeared.

Among the sashes of this exceptional group are the "Sash so-called Acadian" (Plate VI), the "Beaded sash" of the kind worn about 1830 by the Huron chiefs of Lorette, "Sir Isaac Brock's arrow sash", made before 1812, the "Quebec sash", and the beaded arrow sash owned by Dr. Chénier in 1837 (Plate I).

The "Sash so-called Acadian", thus known for no explicitly stated reason, consists of four separate bands, each about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, like simple garters, the border strands of which interlock together at the edges. Each band consisted, like some of the Charlevoix garters, of about sixty double strands.

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[1] M. l'abbé Provost, of the Seminary of Quebec, states that his mother, Rosanna Pouliot, of Ste. Anges, Beauce, used to give the name of *à flammes* to a type of weaving with dented patterns.

The "Beaded sash" found at Sillery, near Quebec, is even more definitely of the garter type, as the bands, each 1½ inches wide, were made independently and sewn together so as to form a band 5½ inches wide. Like the "Sash so-called Acadian," it holds as many bands of arrows made from the centre and pointing towards the ends, and its middle consists of a puckering, split, diamond-like core. In this, as in many of the sashes with Indian tags, white beads are introduced or strung in, to serve as an outline for a part of the arrows (Plate VII).

"Sir Isaac Brock's arrow sash", now preserved at the Public Archives of Canada, in Ottawa, is the oldest known dated specimen, its owner having died on the battlefield in 1812. Although it shares in most of the characteristics of the later Assomption sashes, it differs from them to a certain extent. Its arrows are all turned in one direction; its core is yellow—not red, as usual; the zigzags on both sides of the core consist of exceptionally long parallelograms (called *flèches nettes*); and the colours of the zigzags on both sides of the core differ. Although the wool is twisted hard, as in the Assomption sashes, its texture is looser and rather elastic. Indeed, this sash must have been made before the trade form had come into existence, and for this reason it stands as a link, like the two previous ones, between the earlier and the later stages of development of the technique of finger weaving.

The "Quebec sash" which, according to Dr. Massicotte, is of the kind made for the Hudson's Bay Company, does not belong to the standardized form. Its pattern of central blue arrows runs in one direction and is followed on both sides by slanting lozenges (*flèches nettes*), red and blue, connected by thin lines; a narrow groove in the centre shows that the strands of both halves must have come together here for simple interlocking.

The other sashes of the first group, listed elsewhere as Assomption and Indian, are so uniformly of the same type that they differ only in size, date, and quality. Obviously they must have been made according to the standard style of the Hudson's Bay Company for the needs of the trade. The only noticeable variance in technique consists of a few exceptional cases where the split diamond or oval in the middle causes puckering, as in the case of Col. Eric D. MacKenzie's splendid sash, at Government House, Ottawa, and the arrows in the band point from this centre towards the ends (Figure 1, top). The difficulties that the workers experienced with this technique led to its gradual elimination in favour of the straightforward band of arrows running all in one direction.

OTHER TYPES OF SASHES COLLECTED AMONG THE INDIANS

A number of sashes collected among the Indians, in the past 50 years, form a group distinctly apart from the trade sashes of the Hudson's Bay Company. Most of these share in the characteristics of the French-Canadian sashes and garters, and although they belong to the same fairly recent growth, they must be considered apart. They represent an earlier or independent stage of development, before standardization had eliminated the many variants of style, colour, and form that naturally grew out of the simpler garter forms of the beginning (Plates IX, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, and Figures 1 and 2).

The wool used in these sashes was an imported, ready-made trade article, and it was not spun over or twisted hard, as the Indians presumably had no imported spinning wheels. As a result, the strands, usually coloured with aniline dyes, remain woolly and hairy, and the weaving is loose. Most of these sashes, having been made in the past 100 years, were contemporaries of the trade sashes, yet they represent earlier prevailing types, some of which are still preserved in Quebec districts outside of L'Assomption.

The most widespread variety in this group includes sashes of various widths and sizes made by French Canadians and, presumably, also by Indians of some northern and central nations. The earliest known record of this type, in which the pattern consists of V, W, or with three and more points like saw-teeth across the width of the sash, was illustrated by W. Day, in 1825, in a water colour entitled, "A Gentleman travelling in a dog cariole at the Hudson's Bay . . ." (Plate II). Other sashes of the same type are French Canadian and were recently made in Charlevoix County, lower St. Lawrence, and at L'Ange-Gardien, near Quebec city (Plate X); and others are Indian—Lorette Huron, Iroquois, Shawnee, Sauk and Fox, Osage, etc.

A number of sashes with similar designs are illustrated in "Indian Tribes of North America" by Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, about 1827. For instance, in bands or belts worn by chiefs of the following nations: Cree (I, 262; II, 18), Seminole (II, 262; III, 82, 208, 224). Thus it appears that this type of dented or saw-tooth design had a much wider diffusion than the arrow and "flamme" designs, and is probably older.

This kind of finger-braided sash, like the Assomption sash, seems to have been an early trade sash, as our first record of it shows one of its best examples worn by a bourgeois of the fur trade in the vicinity of Hudson Bay. Indian chiefs from as far as the Seminole country on the lower Mississippi, in the same period, wore belts of the same type, along with beaver hats, trade silver and wampum, European textiles and decorations.

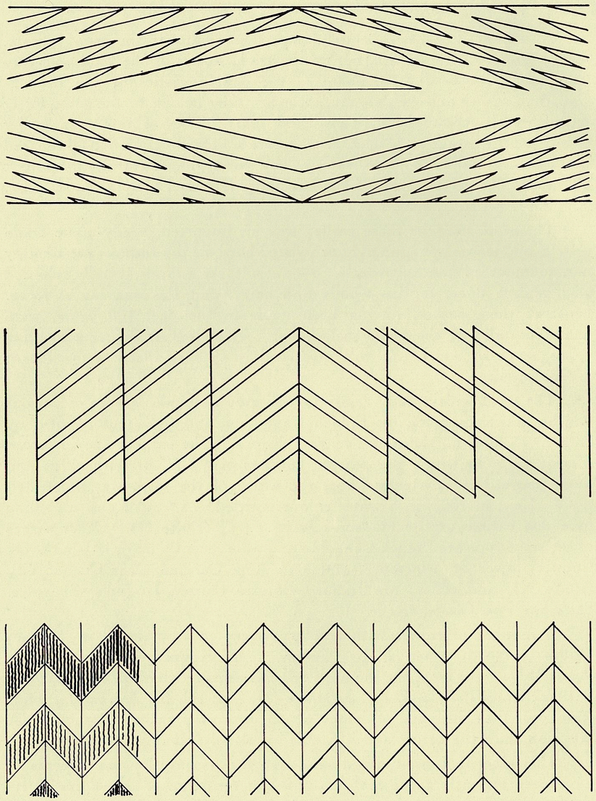

Figure 1. Indian sashes: (*Top*) drawing from arrow sash with exceptional puckering at centre, at the Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.; (*Centre*) Sauk and Fox, 14/1025 (Mus. Am. Ind.); (*Bottom*) Winnebago, 14/1026.

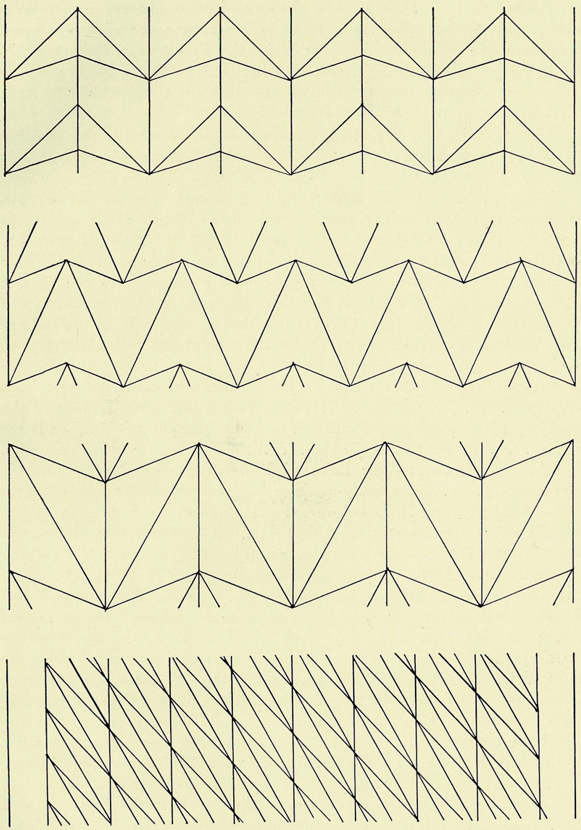

Figure 2. Drawings from sashes at the Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.: (*Top*) Winnebago, 14/1027; (*2nd*) Caddo, 2/2347; (*3rd*) Kickapoo, 2/4609; (*Bottom*) Winnebago, 14/1031.

Moreover, it is clear from a number of contemporary illustrations (down to 1840) that the Assomption sash was not yet widely diffused among outlying Indian tribes. It is in the Brock sash (before 1812) and in Krieghoff's pictures, after 1845, that we first notice the prototypes of the standard sash, and this not invariably; in some of Krieghoff's pictures of Longueuil, the red woollen sash still appears.

Owing to the lack of positive records it is not possible to say whether the sashes of an early type worn by the Indians were home-made or purchased as trade articles. They were made mostly in the neighbourhood of L'Assomption and distributed yearly in large quantities to all the north and western posts as far as Great Slave Lake, as is shown by the invoices of the North West Company for the years 1799 to 1822 (Archives of the Seminary of Quebec), and by similar account books of the Hudson's Bay Company. For instance, 98 Assomption sashes are listed in the "Outfit 1799", 182 in 1804, 110 in 1820, and more than 200 in 1821, for the North West Company alone. Yet it is probable that at least some of the Indians at an early date learned the technique of Assomption sash-making from the French-Canadian voyageurs, and acquired spun dyed wool and beads for the purpose. Thus we find in the "Invoice of Sundries sent from Montreal . . . by the Lakes" (North West Company, Archives of the Seminary of Quebec) such items as: in 1800, "Smallest white beads for sashes . . . to Poste des Chats . . . 1803, 4 lb. worsted yarn, 4/2 . . .", and in 1821: "For Lake of Two Mountains, 16 lb. worsted, ass(orte)d, 7/: £3.10 (no ready-made sash sent to this post); 5 lb. crimson, 5 do. scarlet worsted; 75 lb. col(oure)d worsted, £18.15; 9 lb. round white beads"; all this showing that, at that date, some Algonkins and Iroquois of the Ottawa River used worsted yarn and beads, presumably for making braided sashes. Miss Frances Densmore also states that "belts made of yarn are the most common and characteristic among the Chippewa" of the present day; and she describes the processes followed by an Indian woman making a sash in her presence.[1] The Chippewa processes are identical with those of the French Canadians; the way of winding the coloured yarn, cutting it in sets, sorting out the sets according to colour, is the same as in garter making in Charlevoix County; and the weaving of elaborate sashes is quite similar to that of L'Assomption, even to the use of the *tempié* (split rod to hold the strands in place), and the habit of beginning at the centre of the strands. Mr. Roy H. Robinson, of Chicago, and Miss Ataloa, of Redlands, California, also write that a number of Indians among the Osages, the Poncas, the Omahas, the Pawnees, and the Winnebagoes still use and make braided belts.

The only authentic records we find as to makers of saw-tooth sashes and garters are of French-Canadian women in Montmorency and Charlevoix Counties, on the lower St. Lawrence. Among the most significant representatives of this group is Mme. Odilon LeFrançois, an aged woman of L'Ange-Gardien, near Quebec, who learned in her childhood from her grandmother how to weave wide sashes. Her work is similar to that observed on old Quebec illustrations or collected among the Indians. The design in two of the sashes she made recently consists of one diamond and two diamonds in the centre and of W and saw-tooth designs across the sash from the centre to the ends. Similar sashes, though beaded, were worn by the Lorette Huron chiefs in the neighbourhood, about 100 years ago. One of them at least was purchased in 1805 by the Seminary of Quebec, as appears in the Seminary accounts for that year: "Sauvages, à Louis Vincent . . . cinture." It is doubtful whether the Lorette half-breeds ever made any of the sashes they proudly wore, as no evidence of it could be found there, from 1911 on, even in the recollections of the oldest members of the reservation. A few women in Charlevoix County, used to making garters, spontaneously wove sashes with V and W designs, and stated that similar sashes formerly were made in their localities (Plate XI).

Sashes with other designs—in particular the diamond and the zigzag—were also braided in the early days and had a distribution almost as wide as the V and saw-tooth.

An outstanding sash design is the detached arrow in rows from one end of the sash to the other, and usually with rows of reversed arrows in between. Although these are found on sashes worn by Huron chiefs near Quebec (Plates XII, XIV, XV), some of the best examples occur on Winnebago sashes at the Museum of the American Indian. It is possible that these may actually have been woven by members of the tribes, who specialized in this particular style, which originally was not their own but French Canadian.

RED BASKET-WEAVE SASHES AMONG THE IROQUOIS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

A group of red sashes, most of them decorated with white beads, is now characteristic of the Iroquois and Huron Indians (Plate XVII), but it may at one time have had a wider diffusion, as one example, at the Museum of the American Indian, is tagged Menominee, and another Ojibway. There is one example in the old Dauphin de France collection, described as American Indian, in the Musée municipal de Versailles, and going back to the eighteenth century (Figure 5).

This style of loosely woven sash, the strands of which intercross diagonally, may have been evolved locally by the Iroquois of the Eastern Woodlands, or more probably it represents an early Quebec type, often referred to as red or black sashes, and indistinctly shown in illustrations; but no example of exactly this kind has so far come to light outside of Indian reserves. This technique of weaving is practically the same as in the weaving of bags made out of bark, roots, cord, or yarn among the Ojibways.[1]

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[1] Bur. Am. Ethn., Bull. 86, p. 160.

BRAIDED GARTERS

This simpler form of finger weaving, in Canada, was virtually unknown or unrecorded in Quebec until 1925, when the writer collected two pairs from Island of Orleans near Quebec; and a few other examples, made locally, were observed elsewhere, in particular at Cap-Tourmente, Montmorency.

It became evident, however, that the making of braided garters once had been a craft widely practised in Quebec. An intensive search in a part of Charlevoix County, a conservative district, made it clear that everybody knew how to make garters, and wore them until almost the present day (Plate V and Figure 3). Over sixty pairs of garters were collected there in 1937, and it was learned that the Ile-aux-Coudres people, near Baie St. Paul, also the Petite-Rivière folk, made and used similar garters. At Island of Orleans, not a few people still know the technique, as also in Beauce County and Arthabaska; at St. Roch des Aulnais, L'Islet County; and up the St. Lawrence, near Three Rivers. Some Indians also made (or obtained) garters of similar type, as is shown in a Cayuga specimen collected by the writer in Oklahoma, in 1912.

Finger weaving, its method, designs, and materials are so similar in the garters and the early sashes that the weavers could easily be persuaded, even at this late date when the craft has become obsolete, to make larger and wider garters, until they reached the size of actual sashes. And the few samples made in 1937, in Charlevoix, brought out the patterns observed in old specimens elsewhere (Plate XVIII). These were virtually identical, which shows that the technique of sash making has grown out of that of garter weaving. Indeed, garter weaving at one time must have been universal throughout Quebec, and it is in this form that the Indians may have borrowed it from their white neighbours, unless, as we will see later, the French Canadians themselves had borrowed the technique in its simplest form at the beginning from the Indians and made it their own.

Among the technical similarities that join sash and garter making into a single group are the fundamental processes of finger weaving, of disposing the colours, of starting the sashes from the centre or the ends, the various styles of designs, and the way of fashioning the fringes by braiding, twisting, and ending with knots and tufts. Nearly all Indian sashes and garters so far observed by the writer were made with bartered materials and within the range of the early French occupation and ensuing trade.

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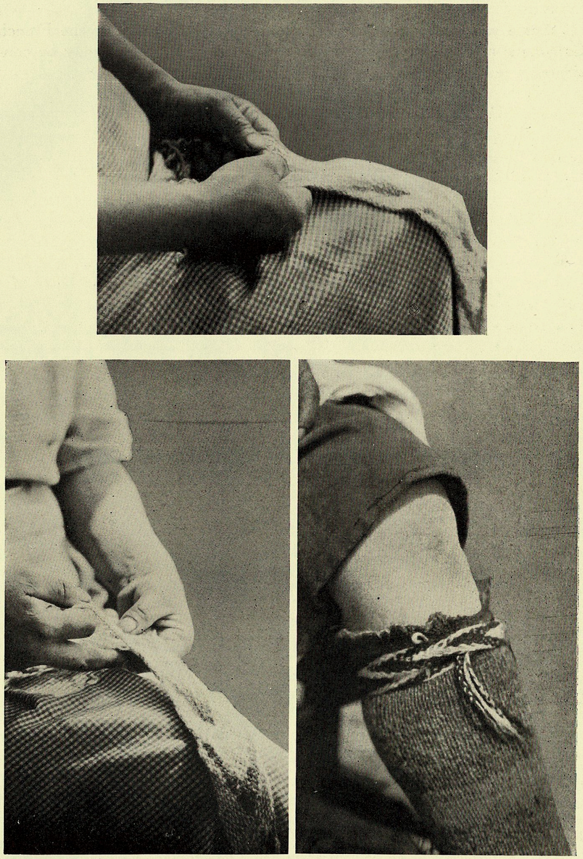
[1] Densmore, Frances: Bur. of Am. Ethn., Bull. 86, pp. 157-158

Plate V



Mlle. Rosa Bouchard of Les Eboulements, Charlevoix County, making and wearing a braided garter—the garter being pinned on her knee in the first two photographs.

ODD GARTERS AND SASHES MADE ON SMALL LOOMS

Some woven sashes, bands, and garters collected among the French Canadians and the Indians fall into an ill-assorted lot that may be considered a residue.

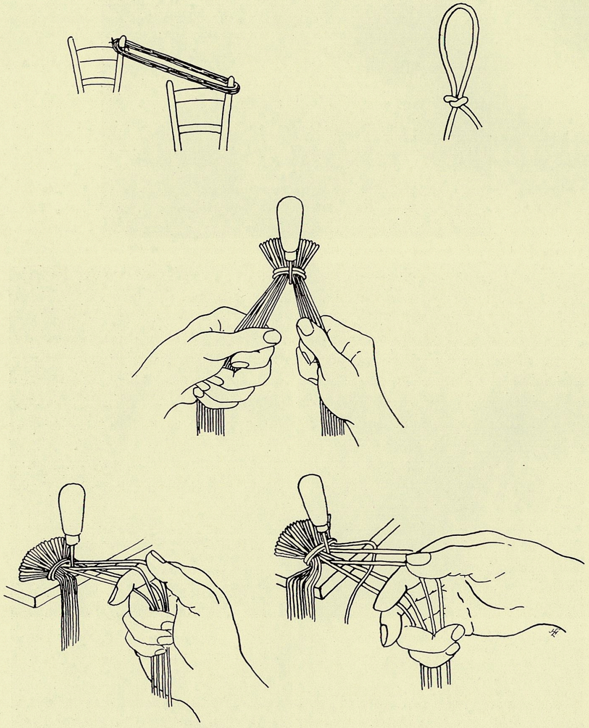


Figure 3. The technique of garter weaving: how the skein was warped and tied, how a set of strands was fixed before weaving, how the weft was drawn through the shed.

The texture in a few, like Colonel de Salaberry's sash (the Public Archives, Ottawa), before 1829, consists of "filet" or netting, which is very loose and elastic. The National Museum of Canada owns a similar "filet" sash. Sister Marie-Jeanne, of Montreal, who rediscovered the technique, stated that in order to net in this way one must know finger weaving; indeed, it is more complicated than the braiding in arrow weaving. A good example of "netted" belt is illustrated in Miss Densmore's "Chippewa Customs".[1]

Some garters in lower Quebec were woven by means of hand-heddles (*grilles à tisser* or *métiers à barreaux*, as they were called at Island of Orleans). Occasional hand-heddles were found in various Quebec districts, and collected among the American settlers (several specimens at the Edison Institute, Dearborn, Michigan); and they were not unknown among northeastern Indians (Ojibway).[2] Hand-heddles were also used (probably introduced from outside) among the southwestern Indians, and among the Tsimsyan and Carrier Indians of the Northwest Coast, where they were introduced, about 1850, by Duncan, the missionary. They were also traditional in Siberia and in Europe.

A small number of sashes were made "à la navette" (with netting needle) at Sillery, near Quebec, about 1825, by Joseph Garneau. A sash described as Winnebago, at the Museum of the American Indian, was made on a simple loom. Another Indian sash, at the Museum of the American Indian, is described as consisting of "square" basket weave, and Miss Densmore[3] shows two Ojibway sashes, one of which is described as a "sash woven of yarn and carpet warp", and the other "Sturgeon flesh" pattern, in a woven belt (these consist of V and W in three distinct bands).

Finally, the Hudson's Bay Company substituted mechanically woven sashes, made at Leicester, England, for the former trade sashes of L'Assomption.

WRITTEN RECORDS OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL PERIOD

That woollen and other garters, bands, and sashes were extensively used during the colonial period, both French and British, is disclosed by the early traders, and by the inventories and auction sales of the period between 1700 and 1760. Sash-like garters, as early as 1651, were also fashionable in Massachesetts and, presumably, elsewhere among the American settlers.

Manuscript records, in the Archives of the Seminary of Quebec, show that garters formed part of personal equipment at an early date.

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[1] Bur. of Am. Ethn., Bull. 86, Pl. 70; also p. 159.

[2] *See* Miss Densmore, "Chippewa Customs"; Bur. of Am. Ethn., Bull. 86, Pl. 68.

[3] Ibid., Pl. 71.

Thus in the 1755 inventory of Guillaume Taillon, a "habitant" of Château-Richer below Quebec, a pair of garters is listed; and these may have been of the braided variety. Yet, in 1759, the pair of garters listed in Louis LeVerrier's inventory, in Quebec, were of crown-lace (*tavelle*), possibly made locally on a small braid- or ribbon-loom. Miliary officers also wore garters of the imported varieties, as itemized in Lieutenant Jaubert's sale at Carillon in 1758: "une Culotte Blanche à jartières d'or" (white breeches with golden garters). Garters and garter materials were an Indian commodity as early as the French colonial period, as they are mentioned in La Vérandrye's lists of goods about 1730-1740. In Colonel Guy Johnson's accounts for the Indian Department of Canada, in 1779-1780 (Archives, Seminary of Quebec), we find that the Crown furnished the Indian Department with "1 piece of fine scarlet gartering; 32 pieces gimps . . ." The "Outfits" of the North West Company for 1798 and 1821 (Archives, Seminary of Quebec) contained abundant yearly supplies of imported garter materials, such as: "Invoice of goods shipped by Phyn Inglis & Co. . . for Account . . . of the North West Company, London, March, 1798. 20 gro. scarlet striped gartering, 20 Highland do; 30, London Scotch; 10 Turkey garters, etc. . ." On the "Invoice 1804" of goods forwarded from Montreal by Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company "Intended for Slave Lake . . .: 1 grs. plain garters, 1 gro. nonsopretties, London Scots garter, Highland garters, scarlet and stript garters . . ." Elsewhere we find: "Portage collars", numerous rolls of Highland and other garters "3 do yellow, 11 do blue, 15 do green", etc.

Among the earliest references to sashes in the records of North America are those of the account books and *Annales* of the Seminary of Quebec. For instance, Mgr. de Laval, before 1700, paid for a sash; and another priest, in 1720, purchased two woollen sashes. In 1765, thirteen woollen sashes were purchased in France for the Seminary by Mr. Jacrau, for 114 lb, and other sashes of silk, calmande, ferandine, camelot, or crespont, were then in use at the Seminary and elsewhere. Then we learn that woollen bands (*passe-poils blancs d'étoffe*), about 1700, were part of the uniform for the Seminary students; these sashes were probably similar to those of the La Flèche Seminary in France. We find no evidence as to the nature of the textile, which we presume to have been loom weaving. In 1813, Sr. St. Cimon, of Hôpital-Général of Quebec, signed a receipt "pour façon de 32 ceintures d'aubes à 5/: £8." thirty-two sashes of the loom variety made by the sisters of her institution.[1]

Lambert, in 1806,[2] illustrates the Seminary costume; and the sash in it, apparently braided or netted and with a short fringe, is coloured red in the centre and yellow on both sides. The present sash of the Seminary, dating back to about 1848, is a one-coloured, manufactured article.

Yet the *Annales* of the institution state that the Seminary sash, which at first was white, gradually became gaudily coloured in the Indian way (*chamarrée de toutes les couleurs mélangées avec un goût sauvage*). The commentators further assert that this costume (including the sash) was imitated by the coureurs de bois (*Coureurs de bois l'ont imitée*—Sulte).

A very early coloured illustration by de Morgues, in 1564, shows a French nobleman wearing tufted blue woollen garters in the presence of Florida Indians (Seminoles?); which shows that such garters presumably always were the fashion among the French on this continent. This fashion is sure to have exerted a definite influence on their Indian neighbours and imitators, even though they may previously have been acquainted with the technique of finger weaving.

In inventories of Quebec and neighbourhood between the years 1700 and 1800 (Archives of the Seminary) we read of odd sashes, at least some of which surely were made locally; but it is possible that they were woven on simple looms rather than finger-braided. For instance, in 1734, J. Pellerin, of the Beaupré coast, owned "une cinture de rassade, 3 lb" (a beaded sash valued at 3 French pounds or louis); Charles Gravel, of the same district, in 1750, owned "deux ceintures de rassade". And many others at that time presumably had beaded sashes in the style of those collected much later among the Indians. There were also many sashes of varied types then used by the clergy and the settlers. In inventories and auction sales recently perused, reference is made to at least sixty-one sashes or belts, most of which no doubt were imported or made out of imported materials; among those presumably home-made were "une cinture de toille" 1730 (a linen sash), "cinture de lenne noir" 1744 (black wool), "3 cintures de laine" 1750 (woollen sashes); and, in 1743, "deux vieilles ceintures de Laine noir . . . 15 sols" (black wool).

In a sketch by Peachy, in 1781, we see a habitant with a sash, apparently of wool, but of only one colour—blue. Even as late as 1848, Krieghoff showed some of the habitants of Longueuil, near Montreal, wearing one-coloured sashes—now red. The weave in these, as in the Iroquois red sashes, presumably consisted of diagonal "basket weave".

The typical arrow sash, with its inherent finger weaving, certainly had come into existence before 1800. At least fifteen of them are listed under the name of "ceintures à flèche" in the invoices of sundries for the North West Company in the years 1800-1803, and a number of others appearing under the general terms of "ceintures" and "worsted sashes" must have been of the same description. These were purchased, at least partly, at L'Assomption from F. Venance or L. Venance—perhaps Vanasse—and paid for by the Assomption notary acting on behalf of the company. We learn from Dr. Massicotte that two arrow sashes (*deux ceintures à flèches*) were listed, in 1798, in the inventory of the Montreal fur trader Chaboillez. And other bourgeois of the same North West Company, between 1780 and 1800, must have owned similar sashes, which later became an insignia of the fur trade. In the Journal de Labadie, a school teacher, we read that, in 1797, on the body of a drowned North West Canadian voyageur recovered near Verchères (below Montreal) was found "une jolie ceinture à flèche qui lui serroit le corps" (a pretty arrow sash fastened around his body). And in a letter of the fur trader Duperon Baby, dated Detroit 1781, a request to his Quebec brother, for "une ceinture qu'il lui demande" (a belt which his son requests) may well refer to a sash of the type later in demand among the western traders; but it is clear that at that time such sashes were not as yet, like silver, wampum, tomahawks, and beads, a current trade article (both of these MSS. at the Archives of the Seminary of Quebec).

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[1] Archives, Seminary of Quebec, Cartable 10, No. 25 C 10.

[2] Lambert's Travels in Canada, vol. I, p. 61.

The refrains of two old canoe songs of the voyageurs mention sashes; one of these even provides a description of what may prove to be an early type of Canadian belt, a "ceinture de toile" such as is mentioned in a Beaupré coast inventory dated 1730:

Elle est en quinze brins,
Ma ceinture de laine,
Elle est en quinze brins,
Ma ceinture de lin.

That is, the type of belt or garter here alluded to was woollen or flaxen and consisted of as few as fifteen strands, like the present-day garters of Charlevoix County.

The problem still remains of how the arrow sash actually originated at L'Assomption, for there is no evidence that it grew out, in this district, of the braided or arrow garter, even if it did in other parts of Quebec. An old Achigan worker still remembers that she heard someone say that, in the old days long ago, her people had first learned how to weave sashes from the Algonkin Indians of Ruisseau-du-Nord, in the vicinity. And Dr. Massicotte himself once was under the impression that sash-making at L'Assomption may have been introduced by the Acadians, perhaps because many settlers in the neighbourhood were of Acadian extraction, or perhaps because of the "so-called Acadian sash", which is a primitive example of the Assomption type, consisting as it does of four garter-like bands with the arrow design, joined together rather artificially.

It is quite possible that the Acadians of L'Assomption and neighbourhood may have learned this kind of weaving from the Algonkins; but it is no proof as to where the Indians themselves had previously learned the process: possibly from other Indians, Hurons near Quebec or Iroquois, or from the French Canadians of an earlier period or of other localities. This most complex type of woollen sash certainly was not part of the equipment of the early natives of the St. Lawrence watershed.

ANCIENT INDIAN SASHES IN THE DAUPHIN DE FRANCE COLLECTION

The evidence that matters most in the study of early finger weaving in Canada so far is lacking, but should we find information about the French colonial period, we might proceed a step farther in unravelling the obscure origins of braided sashes and garters among the French Canadians or the Indians. This is what we shall do now with the help of a number of specimens that the writer recently observed and studied in the Musée du Trocadéro, Paris, and the Musée municipal of Versailles, France.

These specimens form part of what is known as the Palais de Versailles collection of Indian curios made for the Dauphin de France sometime between 1740 and 1780. The Versailles collection was removed, after the Revolution, in 1790, from Versailles and placed in the keeping of the Bibliothèque nationale, in Paris. About 1880, this collection, to which were added some other materials, was split up into two parts, one of which (the smaller) was given to the Musée municipal of Versailles, and the other, to the Trocadéro museum. The bulk of these materials throws a new light on the early aspects of North American ethnography and crafts, one of which concerns weaving, sash and garter making and decoration (Figures 4, 5).

A few pack sashes, more or less authentically listed as Huron, are of the same type—even the design and perhaps the materials—as the "Mohawk burden-straps" studied by Orchard,[1] which consist partly of simple finger braiding and of coloured moose-hair decoration. The design in one of these is in the form of triangles or half-arrows of two contrasted colours; another, of the saw-tooth or triangular pattern; a third has a dented stair-like design; a fourth has small stair-like designs in two rows; a fifth (this and the last two are made of cord) also has a stair-like design; and a sixth, made of bark, is decorated with coloured porcupine quills disposed in the shape of diamonds, stripes, and hour-glasses.

Two other sashes are made of cord and sinew, one of which was probably woven on a hand loom, and the other braided, decorated with porcupine quills in the form of repeated diamonds with serrated edges, and of elongated saw-teeth. So far the designs and type of finger weaving are Indian-like and presumably authentic. They are certainly old—antedating 1750.

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[1] "Indian Notes", Oct. 1929; Quart., Mus. of the Am. Indian, N.Y.

Yet, even during this early period, the natives for many years had been under the influence of the French, particularly the Ursuline nuns teaching their children at Quebec.

The following seven sashes of the same collection stand nearer the varieties later evolved by, or under the influence of, the French Canadians; yet they remain apart—being archaic forms. And in this they are historically significant. They are woven out of sheep's wool; three of them are of black wool like the "vieille cinture de lenne noire" mentioned in an inventory of the Beaupré coast dated 1744; several are decorated with French beads; some of their fringes are tinselled with metal pendants and adorned with beads, dyed porcupine quills, and tufts of horsehair; most of them are finger-braided, one of them in the diagonal basket-weave of the Iroquois; and their designs are akin to those of later Indian and French-Canadian sashes—diamonds, zigzags, hour-glass, and saw-tooth. A sash is made of the "filet" stitch; and to a pair of flannel leggings are attached two pairs of flannel garters, one for the knee and the other for the thigh.

Three old sashes of the transitional type were observed at the British Museum and described as from the Prairies and woven "of the hair of the American buffalo and embroidered with beads . . ." One, of dark wool, is decorated with two rows of saw-teeth in white beads; another, of reddish and black wool, is also decorated with a row of teeth; and the third, seemingly of sheep's wool, is reddish, and decorated with a row of diamonds.

ORIGIN OF FINGER WEAVING

The sashes and garters that we have under observation are of both French-Canadian and Indian make; the technique of finger weaving as exemplified in them, within the historic period, was known to both people; the materials—wool, dyes, beads, tinsels, horsehair—were, in all but a few cases, those of the white man; and the designs were of mixed extraction, and in many cases, especially during the French regime, yielded to the technique and the materials.

The Indians, when they actually wove belts—this seems to have been very exceptional before 1800—were strongly under the influence of the French, and, lacking suitable materials, readily borrowed whatever the trade placed at their disposal, but as soon as they experienced a stimulus from outside they gave free rein to their taste for ornaments and natural ability in craftsmanship. During the colonial period, they made largely out of imported goods such belts or bands as we find in the Trocadéro and Versailles collections—the earliest on record.

We might still be inclined, because of Indian imitativeness and wholesale acceptance of the French attire and personal ornaments by the

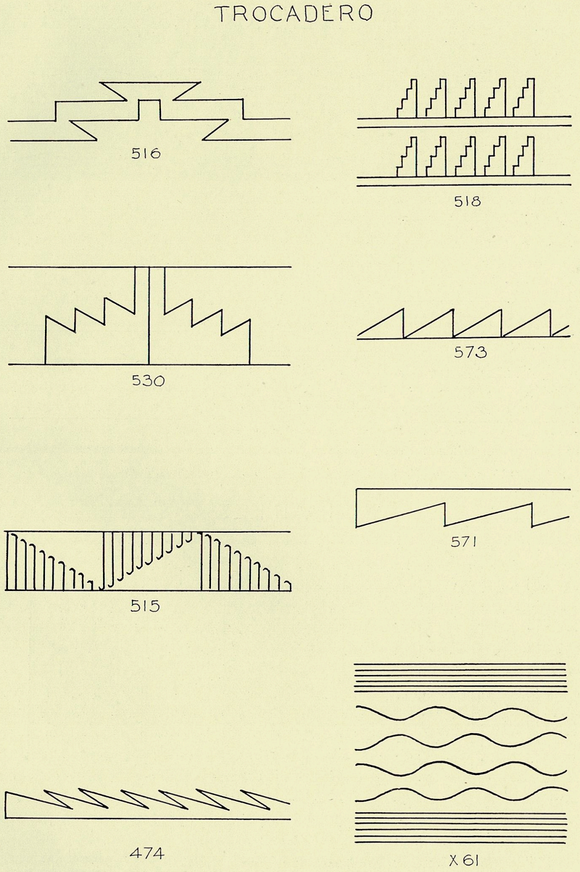

Figure 4. Designs in the sashes and belts of the old Dauphin de France collection at the Trocadéro—French colonial period

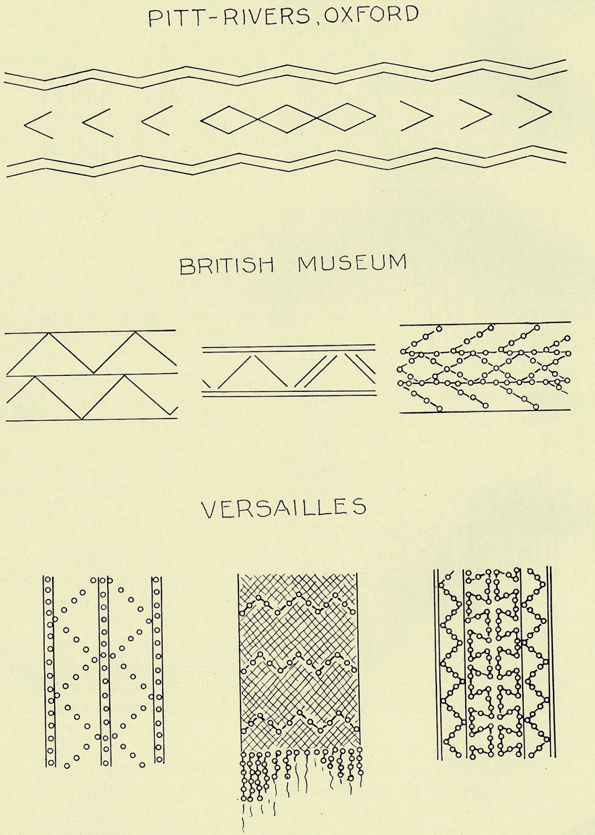

Figure 5. Sashes at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, at the British Museum, and at the Musée municipal de Versailles (the last being from the Dauphin de Francec ollection—French colonial period).

natives, to presume that the woven sash was a European article, even in its initial stages of development on this continent. But here we come to the parting of the ways, in so far as sources are concerned, and cannot further defer the fundamental question: is finger weaving as manifested in the sashes and garters European or native American? One or the other? Or perhaps both?

Is it European?

Probably not French, as we can find no evidence of it whatsoever, either in French museums or in consultations with French folklorists. So that the early colonists may not have had any knowledge of it when they landed in America, and to this day finger-woven sashes and garters are seemingly unknown in France and other continental countries. The only exception in Europe is northern Scandinavia, as disclosed by finger-woven garters made in Norway and possibly Lapland. An Albanian specimen at the Trocadéro may be finger woven, but of this there is no certainty.

Between Norwegians and early French emigrants to North America we know of no immediate connection. Yet if finger weaving was a traditional handicraft in Scandinavia, it may also have existed in other parts of Europe, and then have been forgotten, or it may not yet have been recorded by folklorists.

Was it native American?

It was. Ethnologists and technicians, like Wissler and Amsden, show how widespread was the diffusion of this type of weaving in prehistoric and historic America, North and South. Miss Densmore and Miss Ataloa have seen garters and sashes being made among the present-day Indians, just as they are among French Canadians, and Mr. Roy H. Robinson, of Chicago, is emphatically of the opinion that they go back to prehistory in America.

Is it then possible that the French Canadians at first borrowed from their Indian neighbours the simple process of finger braiding as exemplified in the Iroquois belts and then elaborated upon the process to the point of making it their own; then, through the use of flexible and abundant materials, transformed the craft almost beyond recognition and gave it a new diffusion among the Indians, who were glad to accept it in its renovated style?

For the present at least, it seems sound to accept this theory. For it is probable that the French colonists and woodsmen of early Canada, adaptable as they were and in pressing need of resources, may have learned from the Indians finger weaving, just as they had learned the use of corn, tobacco, the snow-shoe, moccasins, the bark canoe, the practice of maple sugar making, and other native devices. Of this, Peter D. Kalm, the Norwegian naturalist, visiting Canada in 1749, was quite aware, as he made the following observations (translated from the French):

"Whereas many nations imitate the French customs, I notice that here, it is the French who, in various respects, imitate the customs of the Indians with whom they are in daily contacts. They smoke, in Indian pipes, tobacco prepared in the native way; they wear shoes in the Indian fashion, and *garters* and *sashes* like the Indians. . . They borrow the bark canoes of the Indians and use them just as the Indians do" (*Voyage de Kalm en Amérique*).

Should finger weaving and its ramifications be accepted as having existed in prehistoric times both in Scandinavia and in parts of North America, the next step in the study of this highly interesting technique is to explore fully the respective areas of diffusion of each, and find out whether—with more data possibly still available— it is possible to bridge the gap between them; for this earliest stage of weaving may go back to a single origin, then for ages may have covered vast expanses which have now fallen far apart, and may have become isolated, in the form of mere survivals.

ARROW SASHES

When the Assomption or Achigan sashes were no longer made for the Montreal fur traders and bourgeois, and after the Hudson's Bay Company had begun, over 50 years ago, to purchase imitation sashes made on looms, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild of Montreal exhibited a dozen old sashes at the Art Gallery, in March 1907, to draw attention to the disappearance of the interesting Canadian handicraft that they represent. And the Guild, on that occasion, brought over from St. Jacques de L'Achigan old Mme. Françoise Venne, who was photographed when working at a sash (Plate III). Nothing more at the time seems to have been done in recording the facts or trying to preserve the ancient technique of sash weaving.

But Dr. E.-Z. Massicotte, who at the time saw the sashes on exhibition at the Art Gallery and consulted Mme. Venne, was so deeply impressed that he eventually took the initiative for their preservation. As early as 1885 he had joined the L'Etoile snow-shoe club whose members wore woollen sashes, and he owned, like many others in the club, a sash which presumably had been manufactured for the Hudson's Bay Company in England. In a verbal account of the circumstances, which the writer has recently taken in shorthand, Dr. Massicotte said (translated from the French):

"It was fashionable (*chic*) to wear an arrow sash (*ceinture fléchée*), as the merchants, the lawyers and the *bourgeois*, wearing sashes on short

woollen overcoats, walked far more in those days than they do now. Those who had only manufactured sashes did not all know the difference, although the manufactured article was sold for $1 or $2, whereas the best Assomption sashes were worth from $15 to $25, and were often made to order. It was at that time (1885) that the buyers of sashes were first 'cheated' with substitute goods. Among many others I saw wearing sashes was the famous Dr. Mignault, whose father was a well-known bone-setter (*rebouteur*) of l'Assomption or neighbourhood; the Michauds were related to the Lord family, makers of arrow sashes.

"The exhibition of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild at the Art Gallery (Phillips Square), in 1907, gave me an idea of the great beauty and value of the arrow sashes. More than half a dozen sashes, of 6, 7, or 8 inches wide, bore large initials (about 1½ inches), those of the owners, sewn in bead-work or applied on the sashes. And I was so struck (*éberlué*) at the sight of Mme. Venne making a sash before the people that I began to inquire about the makers. But for many years no one showed much interest in the subject.

"Our *Veillées du Bon Vieux Temps* [folklore evenings which M. Massicotte and myself organized, in 1918, under the auspices of the Société historique de Montréal at Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice] caused a revival of interest in the Assomption sash, as we had several specimens on exhibition on the concert stage, and from the profits of the evenings, $50 were made available for the study and preservation of the ceinture fléchée. Having learned that Mme. Napoléon Lord, of Ste. Marie Salomé, still knew how to make sashes, I looked for someone who could learn from her. Finally the Sisters of La Providence, of Fullum Street, Montreal, accepted the responsibility of preserving the art in their institution and entrusted two members of their community with its keeping. One of the two, Sœur Marie-Jeanne, showed particular aptitude not only in the study and the making of the standard Achigan sash but in the varied techniques of finger weaving, as the "filet" sashes and the braided sashes, of which she made interesting silk waist bands. The Sisters of La Providence were the more easily induced to become actively interested in sash making as a few of the old women supported by their order were actually making arrow sashes; these women presumably were from the district of L'Assomption. The sisters tried six or seven kinds of wool but rather unsuccessfully; worsted wool, spun over and twisted hard, was a prime requirement, and Shetland wool seemed the most suitable.

"The origin of the arrow sash, of course, intrigued me, and I inquired from folklorists in France as to whether arrow sashes were known there; but the only information received was that among the Basques in the Pyrenees a textile of the same type was made, but not in the form of sashes.

"The most famous of the sashes I have seen was that of Lavallée, then manager of the Cie. Rolland, of Montreal. It was 12 inches wide, and had been made for him with Berlin wool (*laine de Berlin*) by Mme. Venne, of St. Jacques l'Achigan, as he wanted to have a sash finer than any other, and he paid $25 for it. It was later sold with the Lavallée art collection at Scott and Sons for $150."

The impetus already given to the revival of folk crafts was further enhanced at the Quebec Festivals of 1927 and 1928 at Château Frontenac, under the joint auspices of the National Museum and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The writer brought Mme. Napoléon Lord, with her daughter and Mme. Odilon Vignault, to make sashes there in the presence of the festival attendants from many parts. And, as a leaflet of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild states it, "Thousands of persons saw at close range the handicrafts of Quebec practised by folk workers. These festivals were unique in musical and handicrafts performance on the continent. They served the great purpose of crystallizing in the minds of those who attended the fact that these old-time arts and folk songs are still part of the every day life of some of the people in old Quebec."

In 1930, Mr. O. A. Bériau, then director of handicrafts for the Department of Agriculture, Quebec, became interested in the "ceinture fléchée", and had Mme. Napoléon Lord teach her craft to a few members of the staff at the Quebec school of handicrafts. Courses of sash making under the direction of Mme. Albert Bienjonetti (Brunet) have been given at regular intervals since, at the Quebec school and at various points in the province, where a number of women now are well acquainted with the technique and occasionally make sashes of the Achigan type.

ACHIGAN SASHES

Most of the *ceintures fléchées*, within the memory of old people, were made at St. Jacques de L'Achigan, in L'Assomption County, Province of Quebec; St. Jacques is about 8 miles north of L'Assomption village and L'Assomption is 25 miles northeast of Montreal, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. For this reason the English-speaking people in Montreal often call them Assomption sashes.

Practically all the "habitant" families at St. Jacques and many others in the adjacent parishes of Ste. Marie Salomé and St. Alexis, 50 years ago, used to spend 2 or 3 months in the winter making sashes to meet the Montreal demand. Whole families, including women, children from the age of seven, and even the men, began to work at five, six, or seven in the morning, to stop only at nine, ten, or eleven at night. The extremely low price for their work and the necessity to earn their food forced the makers to muster all their resources to accomplish as much as was possible.

Other parishes in the neighbourhood, though not L'Assomption itself, also practised the craft to a smaller extent; for instance, Mme. Odilon Vigneault, of St. Ambroise de Kildare, Joliette County (5 miles from Ste. Marie Salomé), still occasionally made fine sashes down to about 8 years ago.

The names of the families specializing in this work were: Desrosiers, Mirault, Lord (French-speaking), Venne, Melançon, Légaré, Gaudet, Johnson, Bourgeois, Forest, Léveillé, and Lajoie, a number of whom were of Acadian stock—these Acadians had settled in the province about 1755 or soon afterwards.

At St. Jacques, the people still say: "All the women, 50 years ago, made sashes; they worked night and day." As the sashes they wove by the dozen were for the traders, they always followed the same model. Whenever a finer and broader sash, 8 to 10 inches wide, was needed—that is, a *ceinture tissée plus serré* (more tightly woven) or *faite plus forte* (made stronger)—an expert weaver, like Mme. Desrosiers, Mme. Venne, Mme. Odilon Vigneault, Mme. Napoléon Lord, or some other, took charge of the order for a higher price. These weavers, except Mme. Napoléon Lord, now have died, but many of the folk weavers are left at L'Achigan and neighbourhood that could still weave a standard sash. Though the weavers many years ago ceased to practise their craft, a few of them still survive, for instance: Mme. Joseph Blanchard, of Ste. Marie Salomé, Mme. Joseph Melançon (Elizabeth Lord), Mme. Raymond-Jean Venne, and Mme. Jean-Louis Lord (Julienne Desrosiers), of L'Achigan; Mme. Joseph Larivière, Mme. Joseph Richard, both of Ste. Marie; Mme. Emile Lépine and Mlle. Erméline Mirault, of L'Achigan. These weavers, since they gave up their winter work, occasionally made sashes when they found an opportunity to dispose of them.

Children, particularly little girls, began to work at sashes at the age of about seven. First of all, helping their mother who was weaving, they unravelled the threads behind her, and this was the work of two children. Without their help, the weaver would have had frequently to leave her braiding to unravel the tangled strands behind her. The technique, according to some, was easy to learn; according to others, quite difficult. On the whole, what to an outsider seems a very complex process was natural and easy in a family where the craft had always been practised.

Not a few people, it seems, could make an ordinary sash in a long day, beginning at five in the morning and ending at eleven at night. They worked fast and were so used to the work that, so they say, they could make a sash "les yeux fermés" (with eyes shut). Elsewhere half a sash was made in a day. When the sash was of exceptional size and quality, more time was required. Mme. Napoléon Lord used to weave, in a day, 3 feet and 3 inches, that is, half of one sash, and at night she made the fringe—for that half—twisting the strands with some one helping, for it was difficult for one person alone to twist the strands properly and make the knots at the end. Now a weaver would not think of making more than a few inches a day. In a Montreal census[1] for 1825 it is stated that 3 weeks were required by a weaver to make a sash, at the factory of Nicolas Brisson, prop., to whom 20 shillings were paid for a sash, or 10 shillings for the work alone; he employed three girls (who may have been from L'Assomption).

A few sash weavers would at times gather and work together for an opportunity to chat and while away the dull hours. For instance, Mme. Joseph Blanchard and her two sisters went to the neighbour's house, and, as the house was not very large, the whole place was taken up for stretching the strands from the ceiling to the floor, and the men, who could not pass, pretended to scold.

When the strands were sorted out, placed in a set, and ready for finger weaving (*ourdir*), a *tempié* consisting of two flat cedar sticks, about 12 inches long, was placed on each side of the set of strands, at the middle or centre, and tied at the ends so as to hold them firmly in place. Then one end of the strands was tied either to a beam of the ceiling (*soliveau*) or high up on the wall, and the opposite end was fastened to a long nail on the floor. The weaver then sat beside the strands thus set diagonally and began her finger weaving from the *tempié* or sticks downwards. Thus the weaving was started at the middle or centre of the whole length of the strands, which was the usual or only method for the long sashes. From time to time the *tempié* was loosened and shifted down, to keep it closer to the hands, as it held the body of the fabric well stretched. In order to shorten the length of the stretch from the floor to the ceiling, the strands of the upper part were usually tied in several large knots, spaced from each other. When one end was woven and the fringe completed, the process was reversed; this finished end was tied to the ceiling or the wall, and the other half was woven in its turn, starting at the *tempié*, which had been readjusted just above the starting point.

It would have been practically impossible to weave a large sash from one end, as may be done with the garters; the strands were far too long, as the woven body of the sash alone often was 6½ feet long; and the unwoven strands naturally were of much greater length.

Originally there were several different ways of weaving, but the Achigan sashes are all of the same commercial standard, mostly following the description here recorded from Mme. Napoléon Lord: The arrows or points were usually made the length of the finger (the index), that is 3½ inches; they could be made longer. Most weavers made 7 arrows or points or 6½ to a foot; these were long enough and could be made fairly fast. But the finer sashes, stronger and more tightly woven, like those of Mme. Lord herself, consisted of 14 arrows or points to a foot; which meant more work and better quality.

Mme. Lord made sashes as wide as 8 or 9 inches, but most weavers were satisfied to make them 6 or 6½ inches wide. The narrower ones, with fairly long arrows, were rather loose and elastic, but once pressed and ironed, they looked well. The smallest sashes consisted of more than 100 strands.

The red core or *cœur* (heart), as it was called by the makers, consisted of 80 (double) strands or *brins*. On one side of the core there were 16 arrows or points, consisting of 12 strands each; and as many on the other side; which means, 32 arrows or points in all; making a total of 464 strands (double, or spun, two single threads together) in all. This estimate, given by Mme. Napoléon Lord, slightly differs from that of Mme. Jean-Louis Lord; that is, the sash contained 18 arrows of 12 strands each on both sides of the core; and from 50 to 60 threads for the core. The wider sashes, according to Mme. Napoléon Lord, consisted of 24 arrows or points on each side, the number of strands remaining the same, and the core the same.

The design or pattern, which could vary as in the garters, depended upon the placing at the start of the coloured strands and their number.

Red, pale blue (*petit bleu*, as it was called), dark blue (*gros bleu*), yellow, and green were the usual colours—always the same among the Achigan weavers.

As a decorative device, which was called *flécher les flèches* or *carreauter* (*quadriller*), that is, checker any given colour in the arrows, the weaver placed 6 strands of one colour and 6 of another together, one colour above, the other under; which made them emerge in turn over the weft.

The fringes were often made by younger members of the family or even, at Napoléon Lord's, by M. Lord himself, who said that, to twist the two or three strands together well, you must be two. The strands were twisted between the palms of the two hands—*Ça vrille*, he said, it turns spirally. Before making the twists, the strands were plaited for about an inch, and the twists ended in a knot and a tuft.

The wool required (*laine à ceintures*) for making sashes was of a special type—rough and hard, and dyed in advance. For each sash 2 pounds and upwards were used. The wool was purchased in skeins (*écheveaux*) arranged in bundles (*balles*) of 10 pounds of each colour. The colours were bright, fresh, and fast. The local merchant, Dugas, used to state that he ordered his supply from France, but it might have been

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[1] Livre de Dépouillement du Recensement fait de la Cité en 1825 (Archives of the Seminary of Quebec).

more exact to say that he obtained it in Montreal, possibly through the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company. Mme. Vigneau, a good weaver who died only a few years ago, preferred store wool called Sexon (?), its strands being larger. After the wool was received it was twisted (*retordue*) on the spinning wheel at home, and two single threads were spun into one, to give more solidity to the strands.

When the sashes were finished they were moistened, stretched, covered with fine cloth, and pressed (*mises en presses*) with hot irons; then they were folded up, ready to deliver.

Orders for large numbers of sashes came from Montreal, most of them through M. Dugas, the local merchant at Saint-Jacques L'Achigan. The Richard families (two households) and others worked for a M. Hudon, also a M. Pilon, presumably merchants, in Montreal. Mme. Napoléon Lord's mother, as long ago as she could remember, used to work for a M. Bélanger, who had been brought up among the Indians, had married a Morin of St. Jacques, and traded with the Indians; his sashes were locally known, about 1830 to 1850 (?), as "les ceintures de M. Bélanger".

Joseph Dugas, the only local merchant interested in the making of sashes at L'Achigan, as this was an important item of his trade, received large orders (though they came irregularly, mostly in the winter) from Montreal, and arranged for speedily filling them. His method of trading with the weavers was typical of the period, also they provided him with a flourishing business.

Dugas did not pay the workers in money, but in goods, and the old people state that he used to exchange articles from his old stock for their work so that, by the end of the winter, he had emptied his store (*vidé son magasin*). From time to time the weavers sent their new sashes to the store and did their best to secure useful supplies for the value of their work.

The value of the small sashes was set very low, about 30 or 35 cents, the wool having been furnished by the merchant, and *ourdie*, that is, prepared in sets of strands by especial workers, at his cost. It meant for each worker about 15 cents for a day's work.

Before M. Dugas handed over the wool to the weavers it was spun and twisted hard in double strands and then *ourdie* or prepared in properly disposed sets of strands held in place together by large loose knots and ready for finger weaving. As the preparation of the strands or *ourdissage* in time became a specialized task, it was given out to a few selected workers who preferred this work on account of higher returns. The *ourdisseuses* for the closing period were Mme. Julienne Desrosiers, who is now 75 years old, and her sisters, all of Ste. Marie Salomé (Mme. Jean-Louis Lord, Mme. Magloire Lord, and Mme. Joseph Melançon). Dugas brought over the wool for them to mount it (*on la montait*) in sets all similar to each other; then he distributed these sets among the weavers. Or, in other cases, the weavers came for the sets of strands, which were charged to them. When, in the winter, all the *ourdisseuses* at Mme. Desrosiers' were at work together it was impossible to move in the house, and the men did not like it (*les hommes n'aimaient pas ça*).

The weavers, who would have preferred to receive money for their work, had to accept the trader's system of barter, which was patterned after the Hudson's Bay Company's. Dissatisfied with their unreasonably low pay from a trader whom they considered well off, they brought their grievance to Rev. Tancrède Viger, their parish priest about 30 years ago (it may well be over 40 years ago). M. Viger, who held the opinion that they were ruining their health to no good (*elles travaillaient pour rien*), urged them to require money for their sashes or refuse to go on with the work. But the merchant, who had grown old and indifferent, would not change his ways, as they had proved profitable. An impasse resulted and the ancient craft of sash-making at L'Achigan came to an end.

The parish priest looked for a substitute to enable his parishioners to earn a living in the winter. He arranged for the purchase of sewing machines for them and secured orders from Montreal for sewing at home. But long before the machines were fully paid for, orders ceased to come and the workers found themselves in debt, sorry to have dropped the substance for the shadow.

The weaving of sashes at L'Achigan and Ste. Marie Salomé began many years before the time of the present-day survivors. When questioned about the origin of the craft, one of them answered: "Grandmother Desrosiers made sashes just as we do." Mme. Napoléon Lord said that she had learned from her mother, Adelaide Richard, who had made sashes since her childhood; and she concluded: "A ma connaissance, il s'est, ici, toujours fait des ceintures" (to my knowledge, sashes have always been made here). But sash-making did not develop, at L'Achigan itself, from the technique of making braided garters, as nobody there seems to have made garters. Yet, Mme. Napoléon Lord at least on one occasion after the Folk-song and Handicraft Festivals at Quebec, spontaneously made a braided waist band out of silk that closely resembles a braided garter.

Mme. Jean-Louis Lord remembered having heard old women say that, before the parish of L'Achigan was established Indians (Algonkin), at Ruisseau-du-Nord, knew how to make sashes and had shown their Canadian neighbours how to weave them. As soon as the land was cultivated the Indians moved away, but the art of making sashes was preserved.

A Mlle. St. Jean, of St. Jacques de L'Achigan, who made sashes, went away to Manitoba, about 60 years ago, and there, according to Mme. Napoléon Lord, showed the Indians how to weave sashes; this she told the Achigan people, many years ago, when on a short visit home.

As many of the settlers at L'Achigan and in the neighbourhood are of Acadian origin (including the Lord family, whose grandfather cleared the land there), it has been presumed, but mistakenly, that the craft of sash-making originated in Acadia. There is no evidence to support this theory.

After the writer had invited Mme. Napoléon Lord and her daughter Alice, in 1927, to figure among the folk weavers at the first Quebec Festival, and to give demonstrations of sash-making, Mme. Odilon Vignault, of St. Ambroise de Kildare, who also made fine broad sashes of the best type, was discovered and invited to join Mme. Lord at the second festival. Their activities at the festivals drew the attention of the Department of Agriculture in Quebec, who had supposed, like others, that this old Canadian craft was lost, and from that moment on undertook to help in its preservation. Mme. Lord was later invited by the Ecole des Arts domestiques at Quebec, where she taught finger weaving to five women students. Since, Mme. Lord has taught a few others, just as she had previously, when brought to Montreal, shown the method to Sister Marie-Jeanne.

GARTER WEAVING

Woven garters and bands in French Canada once were made in three different ways: (1) on a small ribbon loom with loose thread heddle controlled by two treadles, of the type preserved at Hôtel-Dieu, Quebec; (2) with a wooden heddle (*grille à tisser*) hand controlled or fixed on a bench, such as are occasionally found in rural Quebec and among the Indians—a woven garter of this type was collected at Island of Orleans (Plate XXIII); (3) by means of finger weaving or braiding, of the kind studied here. The following description of the technique of garter weaving is restricted to this third kind—finger weaving, as illustrated in the garter collection made by the writer for the National Museum of Canada, and as observed and recorded in 1937 with Mme. Alma Tremblay, 61 years old, of St. Joseph des Eboulements, Charlevoix County, Quebec.

The wool, produced on the farm, is prepared at home and dyed in the usual way; Mme. Tremblay's is carded at Onesime Tremblay's mill at Blagousse (in the neighbourhood). It is spun first in single threads, then two (sometimes three) threads are spun into one strand.

When the strands are ready, and rolled in small balls of various colours, they are *ourdies* or mounted in sets or skeins. To do this, two wooden chairs are placed back to back at a distance from one another that determines the length of the pair of garters. The strand of one colour is first tied in a simple loop (*boucle simple*) to the upright of a chair (*chaise en quenouille*), stretched and wound around the projecting tops of the opposite upright and the first upright as many times as strands of this colour are required, let us say, twelve times if twelve strands of white are needed. At the end of the twelfth, the white strand is tied in a knot to the red strand on the right hand side. This knot is made over the left thumb in a peculiar way.

The strand of the second colour is then wound around as many times as strands of this colour are required—perhaps twelve times, like the first. The strand is tied to the one of the next colour, yellow, orange, or green, in the same way as the first and at the same place, to the right hand on the back of a chair. It does not matter how the colours are placed now as their order can be changed later, but they must be in even numbers on each side. In her demonstration Mme. Tremblay used forty-eight strands in all.

The strands are then cut with scissors close to the upright on the right side first, then on the left, thus separating the coloured strands in two halves out of which the pair of garters are to be woven.

To keep the threads from becoming entangled, one set is loosely tied in a simple knot and placed on the shoulder while the first garter is woven out of the other set. To make this knot, take hold of the set of strands with the two hands at about 6 inches from one another, then draw one end over the fingers of the left hand and pass it inside so as to make a loop.

To weave a garter, one may begin either at one end or at the middle.

(1) BEGINNING THE GARTER AT ONE END

When it is decided to make a fringe 3 inches long, let us say, a woollen thread is passed twice around the set of strands at the place where the fringe is to end and the weaving to begin, and is tied in a loop.

The fringe being upwards or above and the skein held in the left hand, the strands of coloured wool are then picked out with thumb and index of the right hand, according to the weaver's plan. Upon this selection and separation depends the pattern. So many strands of one colour are drawn together and placed on the back of the chair, and so many of another colour; these are to form the half to the right. As many strands, presumably, of the same colours are to be sorted out on the left side. When all the colours are in the right order, the two halves of the strands are held, one in each hand (Figure 3).

The end of the skein at the place where it is tied around (at the inside end of what is to be the fringe) is then fixed firmly by a borer to the top of a table—some weavers, instead, fasten it to their knee with a safety pin (Plate V). The braiding is now begun.

The one half of the strands, in the right hand, consist, let us say, of four white threads, two green, six white, six red, and six yellow. The threads for the other half are laid aside.

A strand is placed above the index of the right hand, and the next, under, another, above, another, under. The index here is used as a heddle to separate the strands, above and under, of the warp. All the strands of the right half are presently divided in two halves, over and under the index.

The thumb of the left hand, then introduced between these two separate sets, or the shed, reaches the first strand to the right (here a white strand), draws it across to the left and brings it to the centre, where it is dropped. When this is done, the thread replaces the index and becomes the first thread of the weft in the right half of the garter.

Then the left hand works in the same way at the other half on its side, the right hand helping; but the coloured strands are placed in the reverse order. When the strands are over and under the left index, the thumb of the right hand pulls the last strand at the left through the shed to the right and brings it to the middle, where it is dropped. This second thread has thus become the first weft thread of the left half of the garter.

It is now the turn of the right side. The strands are alternately separated into two halves again, over and under the index, the warp threads over the finger now being those that previously were under, and the left thumb reaches for the first thread to the right (which at the start was the second), and brings it to the middle, where it is dropped.

The strand drawn from the right is under the thumb; the one from the left, over the thumb. So that now the threads that were on the extreme right and left are in the middle.

The warp strands on the left are then placed alternately over and under the left index, and the right thumb reaches the last strand at the left to bring it across to the middle and drop it.

The two sets, right and left, are kept separate by the last two fingers of each hand.

Before drawing the thread across with the opposite hand, this hand drops the set of strands or the skein. The thumb, when introduced in the shed, presses the weft upwards while the warp is kept rigid, to make the tissue uniformly tight; and the thumb with the index of the left hand draws the thread from the right to the centre, and, inversely, the right hand from the left; in the same way, the separation of the strands over and under the index is made by the opposite hand.

The complete arrow pattern is produced by the continuation of this process, the last thread brought from the sides to the centre becoming a warp thread, where it interlocks with its neighbour of the opposite half.

Near the end, when weaving reaches the point where the fringe must begin, knots are made to keep the threads firmly in place.

Three strands to the right are held, one in the right hand and two in the left; the strand to the right is passed between the two others, then the three strands are drawn, and a simple knot is made; in the same way the others, in sets of threes. In that case, the strands are not braided. When braids are made instead of knots, the braiding of the strands (three by three or more) is started from the point where the weaving stops; and the knots are made at the end of the braids.

If for some reason the weaver wants to stop working before the garter is finished, the index and middle finger of the left hand are introduced between the two sets of strands (right and left), the two sets are then crossed, and a simple loop is made.

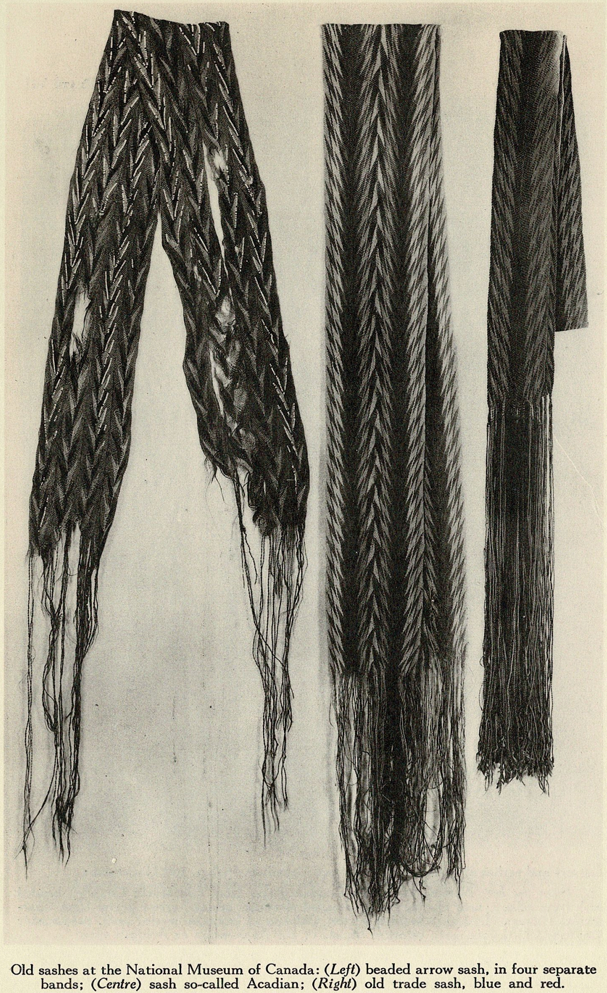
(2) BEGINNING THE GARTER IN THE CENTRE

The chair on which the weaver sits must face the back of the chair to which the skein is tied at one-third of its length by means of a simple knot first and a second, to make sure that the strands are held firmly in place. The feet of the weaver hold the chair in place.

The coloured strands are then sorted out for the half on the right side; let us say, four white strands, two green, six red, six yellow, and six white. And then the braiding begins as described above (No. 1).

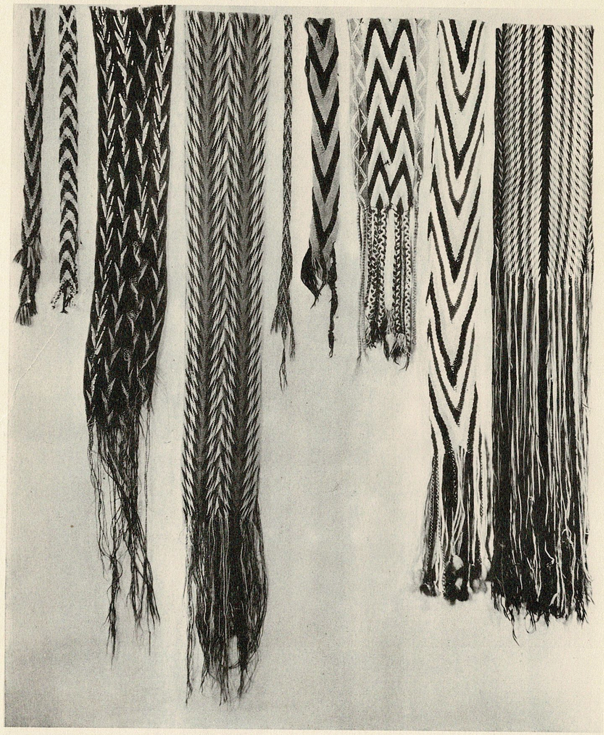
When the point is reached where the fringe is to begin, the same method as above is followed.

Then the skein tied to the back of the chair is unfastened, the woven end is fastened in its place in the same way, and the weaving of the second half proceeds. A slit or opening in the middle is the result of this method, but with skill it is possible to restrict its length, which every maker endeavours to achieve.



Old sashes at the National Museum of Canada: (*Left*) beaded arrow sash, in four separate bands; (*Centre*) sash so-called Acadian; (*Right*) old trade sash, blue and red.

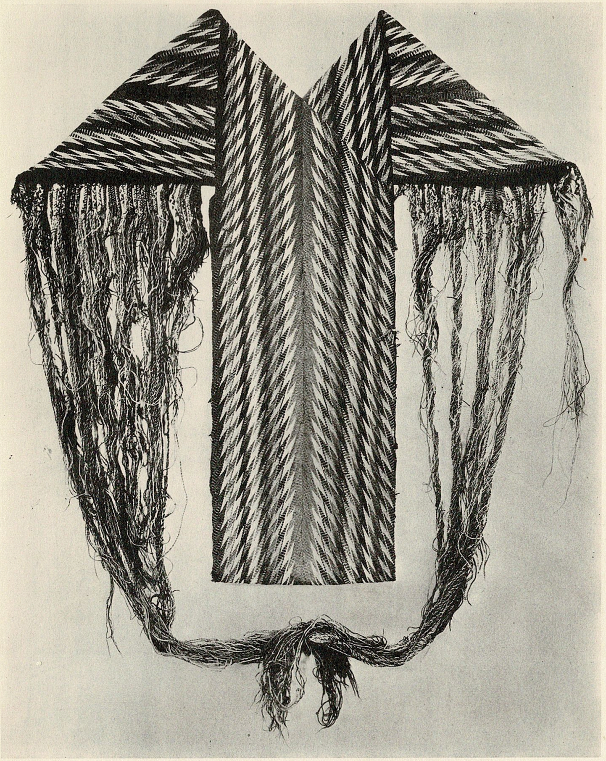
PLATE VII



Garters and sashes of various types—French Canadian, Indian, and Norwegian:

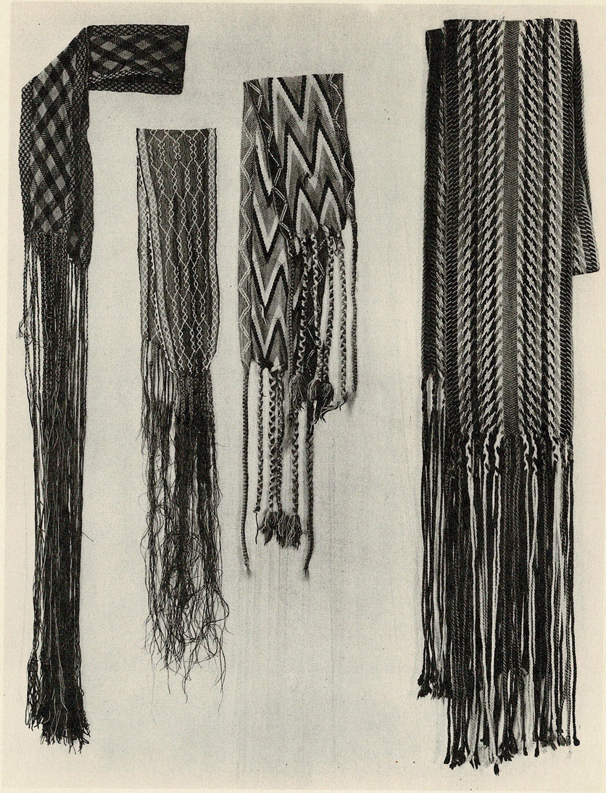
From the left: Norwegian garter; braided garter from Charlevoix County; beaded sash from Sillery, near Quebec; sash so-called Acadian: braided arrow garter from Charlevoix; Cayuga (Iroquois) braided garter, Oklahoma; Iroquois beaded sash, presumably Cayuga; Charlevoix sash; ceinture fléchée of the Assomption or Achigan type.

PLATE VIII



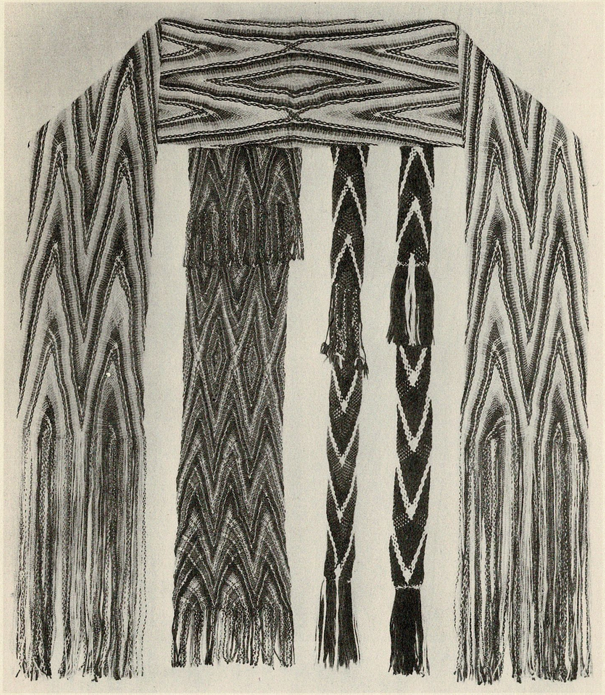
Assomption sash of fine quality, at the Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.

Plate IX



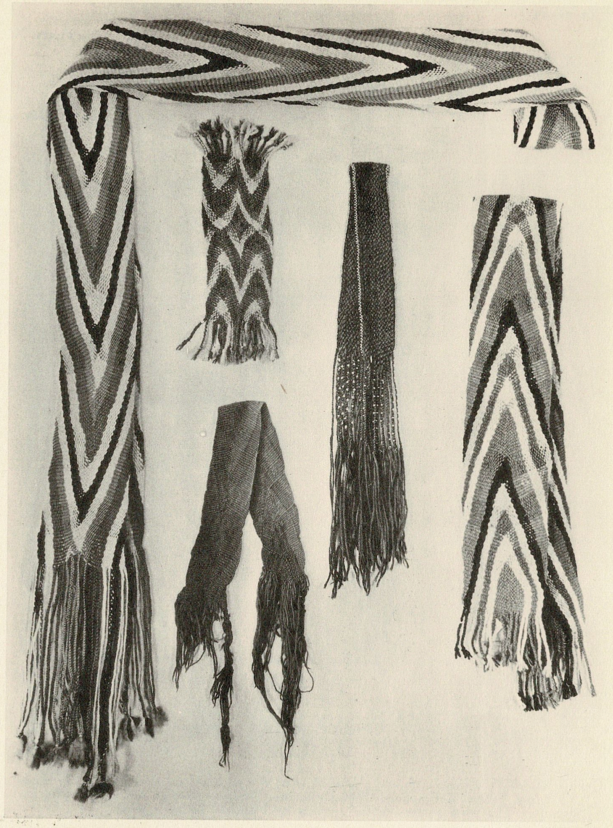
Iroquois and trade sashes: (*First two to the left*) Iroquois sashes at the National Museum of Canada. The two sashes in the centre are beaded; the third from the left, also Iroquois, is finger woven, with the W design. Modern trade sash of the Hudson's Bay Company, manufactured on a loom in England.

Plate X



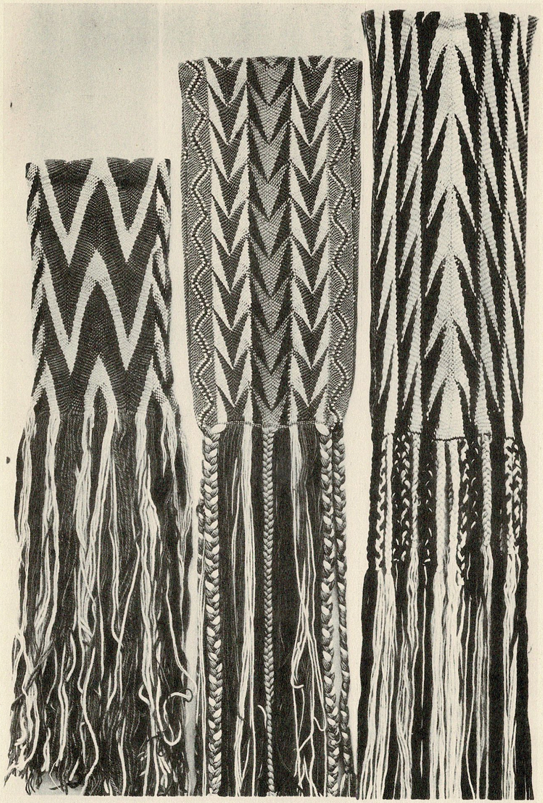
Quebec sashes: the large sash and the scarf with W and diamond designs recently made by Mme. Odilon LeFrançois, Château-Richer, Quebec, after an old tradition in her family. The wide garters recently made by Harold Pfeiffer, Quebec.

Plate XI



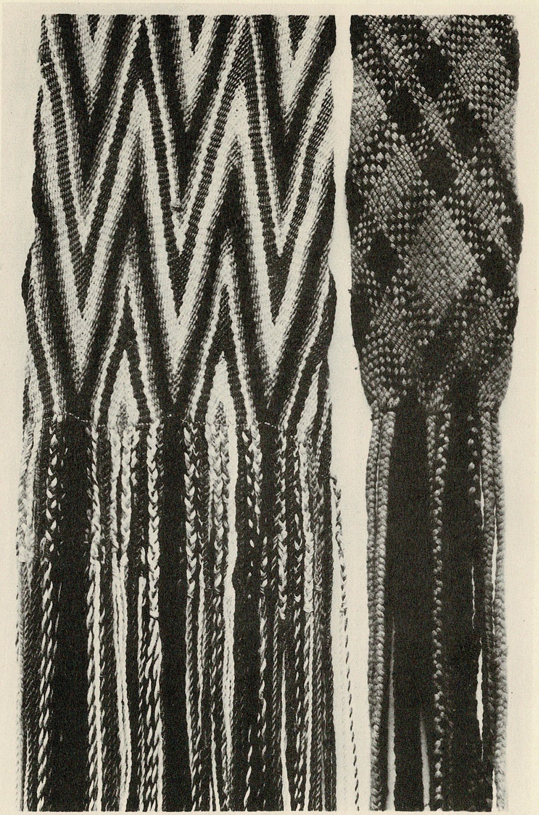
Sashes and garters (National Museum of Canada): (*Top*) V sash made in 1937 by Mme. Thomas Côté, of St. Placide, Charlevoix; (*Next—short*) sample of sash made of two interlocking bands, by Mme. Eloi Tremblay; (*Bottom*) Cayuga garter; (*Right*) V sash made in 1937 by Mme. Eloi Tremblay at St. Urbain, Charlevoix.

Plate XII



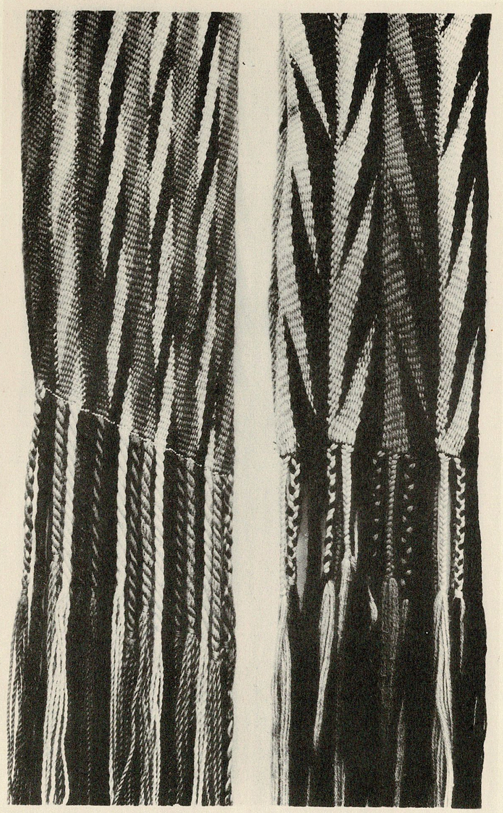
Indian sashes: Osage sash (12/820—*left*); Osage sash (12/833—*centre*); Winnebago sash (14/1024—*right*) (Museum of the American Indian, N.Y).

Plate XIII



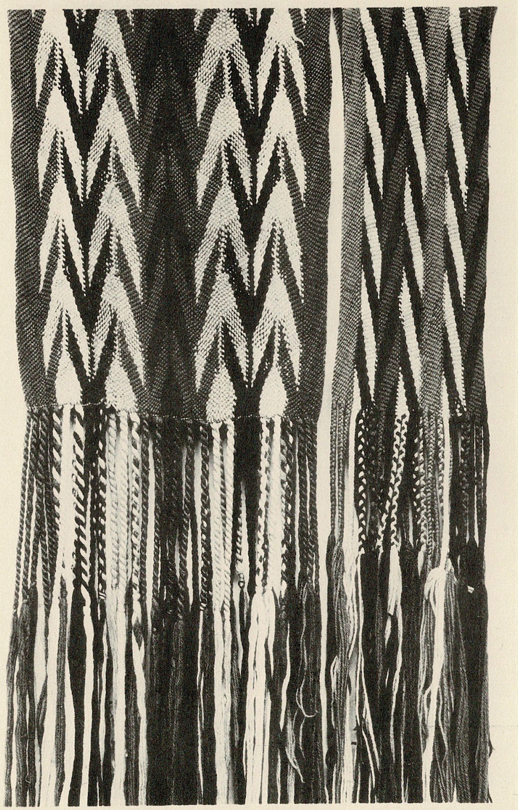
Indian sashes: Sauk and Fox sash (*left*); Sauk and Fox sash (16/4477—*right*) (Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.).

Plate XIV



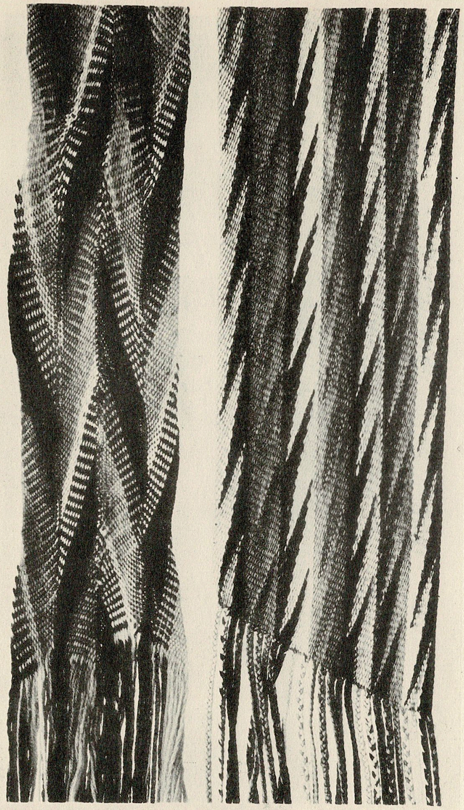
Indian sashes: Menominee sash (14/3419—*left*); Winnebago sash (14/1032—*right*) (Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.).

Plate XV



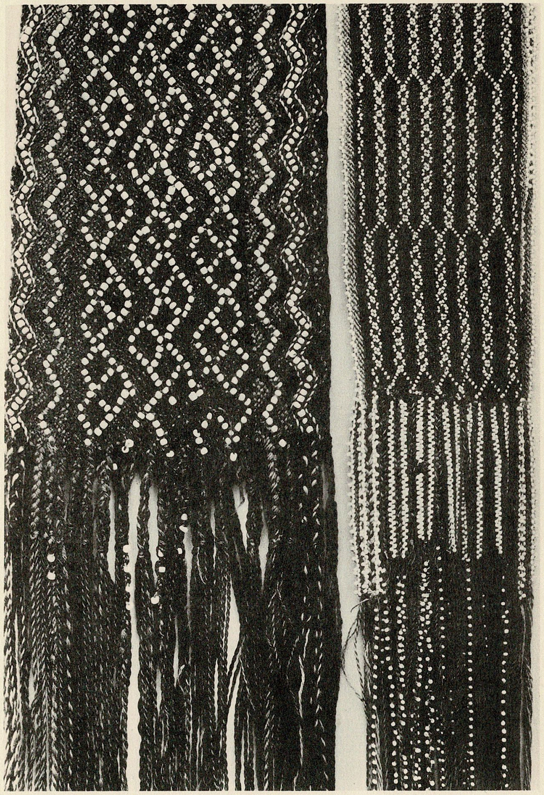
Indian sashes: Winnebago sash (14/1028—*left*); Menominee sash (14/3418—*right*) (Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.).

Plate XVI



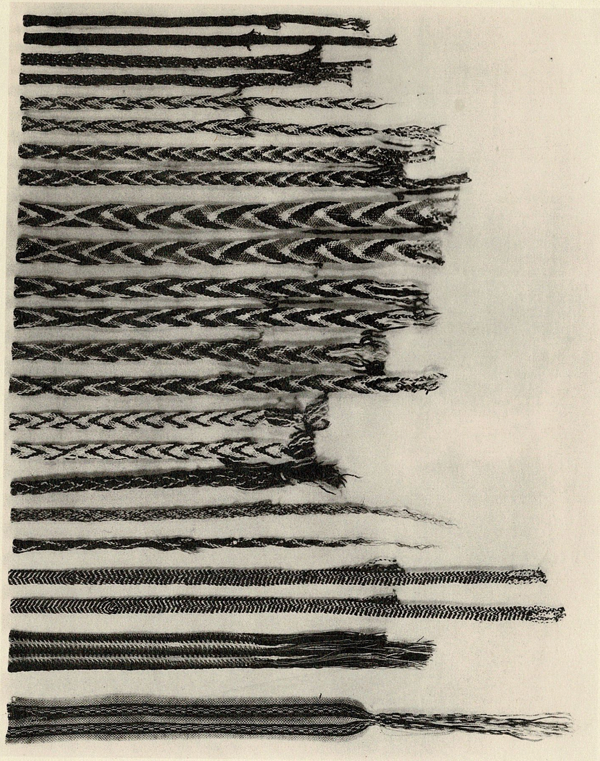
Indian sashes: Shawnee sash (2/5692—*left*); Shawnee sash (2/532—*right*) (Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.).

PLATE XVII



Seneca sash (17/9676—*left*); Iroquois sash (8373—*right*) (Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.).

PLATE XVIII



Garters: (*Left, 1st and 2nd*) netted sashes; (*3rd and 4th*) braided garters from St. Urbain; (*6th and 7th*) braided garters from Island of Orleans. Other braided garters from Charlevoix County (National Museum of Canada).

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